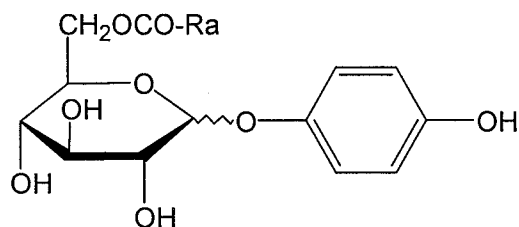


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original): An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

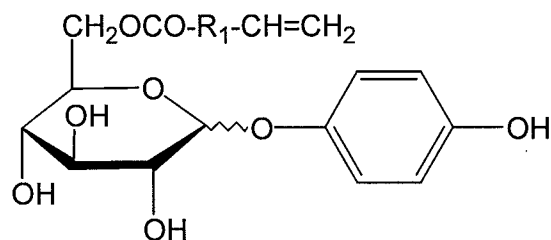
Formula (1)



wherein Ra is a hydrophobic group.

2. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (2):

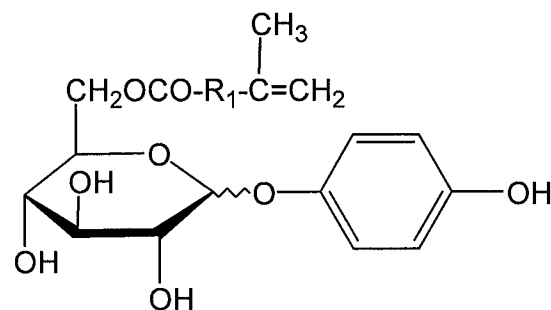
Formula (2)



wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

3. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (3):

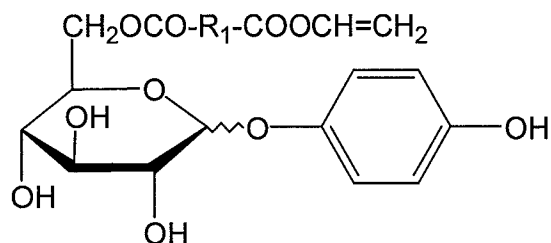
Formula (3)



wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

4. (Original): An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (4):

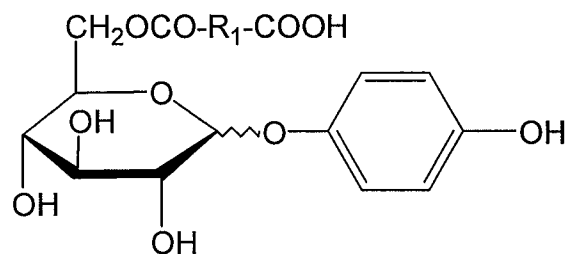
Formula (4)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

5. **(Original):** An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (5):

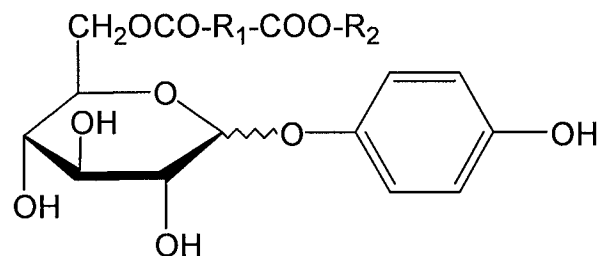
Formula (5)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

6. **(Original):** An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (6):

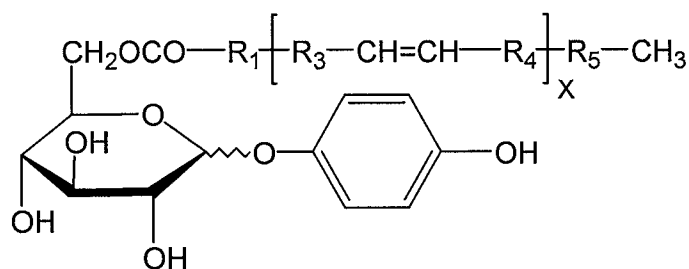
Formula (6)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R_2 is an alkyl group or an aryl group.

7. **(Original):** An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (7):

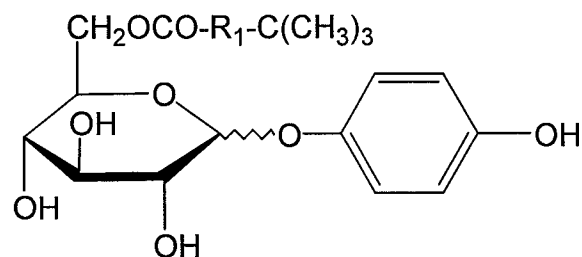
Formula (7)



wherein R_1 , R_3 , R_4 and R_5 are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6.

8. **(Original):** An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (8):

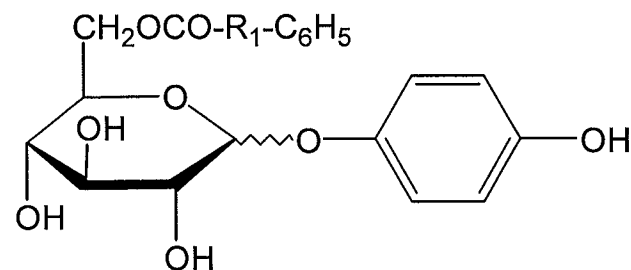
Formula (8)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

9. **(Original):** An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (9):

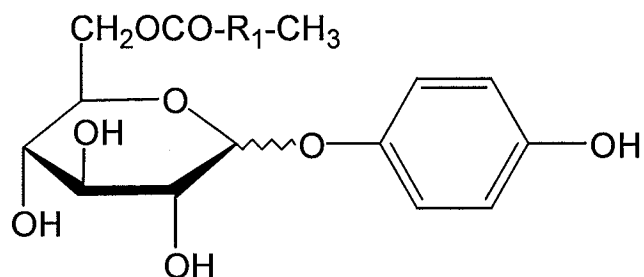
Formula (9)



wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

10. **(Original):** An arbutin ester compound according to claim 1, which is represented by formula (10):

Formula (10)



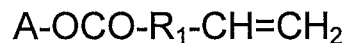
wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

11. **(Previously presented):** A tyrosinase inhibitor comprising, as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1.

12. **(Original):** An external preparation for the skin, comprising the tyrosinase inhibitor according to claim 11.

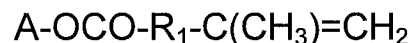
13. **(Original):** A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (19):

Formula (11)



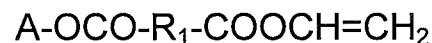
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (12)



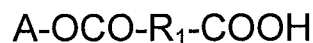
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



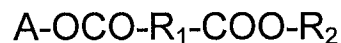
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)



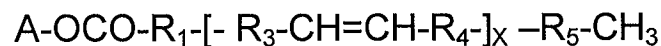
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)



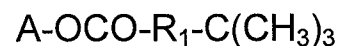
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R_2 is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (16)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R_1 , R_3 , R_4 and R_5 are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

Formula (17)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (18)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (19)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

14. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. **(Original):** The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently,

adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36 **(Canceled)**